

How to achieve a smooth transition from fellowship to faculty

'The course of true love never did run smooth', William Shakespeare

Think about major events in your life; consider highlights, low points, transitions, and critical events. Then reflect on things that have shaped and impacted you in an important manner: key people, important teams or groups, places and vital experiences. Imagine your future path in the next 5 to 10 years: Which goals do you aspire to achieve? Where do you want to be? How do you want colleagues and family to perceive you? Finally, consider how you hope transitions between the different phases of your career and family life will play out – what will you pursue and what do you wish to avoid? Think and read on in five minutes.

Move out of your comfort zone

As pointed out by Shakespeare in the quote above, important transitions and relations are often not smooth because they call for changes to the status quo. However, you may be able to prepare for the transition by considering a number of issues related to the change in tasks, responsibilities and expectations. Table 1 outlines a number of important transitions, each both a challenge and an opportunity. It is beyond the scope of this paper to go into detail and discuss each transition. Pursuing an academic career takes determination, which means being certain that's what you want. If you are already certain of your career goals, also know that we are all different and general considerations and advice on how to achieve a smooth transition from fellowship to faculty may be too simplistic. However, transitions and adaptive changes are essential for all human growth, and while they can be painful and difficult, involvement never happens without transition. They are therefore worth contemplating. The trick is to be aware of the challenges associated with transitions, prepare for them and consider them part of a development and an expansion of your capabilities. Transition is a powerful tool for personal development, but you should be ready to embrace the change and move out of your comfort zone.

Transitions require both professional and personal changes

Not only will you need to transition from one type of work to another, you also need to adapt personally (Table 1). The personal transition may be as much a challenge as the professional transition. You need to adapt your own identity as you take on new roles, build new relationships, adapt to new values, new behaviours and new approaches. It may take a while to realise that your surroundings will see you differently. For example, imagine you step into the office of a junior fellow, easily discussing with other young colleagues, having fun. If you were a professor or senior member of the faculty, the mood would likely change when you entered the room and wished to join the conversation.

You need to develop your personality into a new role – you change and you will likely also change your surroundings as you take new initiatives. This can create tensions – don't expect standing ovations, in particular if you wish to make major changes and seek new directions. People and systems tend to be very conservative, protect themselves, and avoid changes and new challenges. New directions may be seen as criticism of existing ones and growth and initiative can lead to fear of the future. You may be met by active inertia, the tendency to follow established patterns of behaviour despite important challenges and developments that call for changes. For you to tackle the transition smoothly, you need professional skills as well as a resilient, adaptive personality.

Power and responsibility goes together

Many express frustrations during their fellowship regarding lack of freedom, lack of recognition of their hard scientific work, lack of independence. They often blame the leaders or institutions for restricting their independence and autonomy. You may long to be in a position where you can work freely, make necessary changes and do things smarter. However, transition to faculty doesn't necessarily change these things; on the contrary, often the tasks, challenges and responsibilities increase in number and complexity. Your transition

Table 1. Important transitions from training to faculty.

Fellowship	Faculty
Seeking supervision	Supervisor
Build network	Maintain and expand network
Use infrastructure	Create infrastructure
Find a group with the right culture	Create culture, recruit and maintain talent
Seeking possibilities	Creating possibilities
First author	Senior author
Employee	Employer
Mentee	Mentor
Exploitation	Exploration
Accountability	More accountability
Develop personal profile	Leader/role model

from being enveloped in few projects, to overseeing many projects and juggling research, teaching, mentoring and administrative tasks, is demanding. Develop the emotional capacity to tolerate this, including the uncertainty, frustration, work load and pain it may cause.

Go abroad

Deep knowledge into an organisation and institution can be a great advantage and alleviate a number of practical barriers. However, the transitions mentioned in Table 1 may be more difficult if you stay in the same institution for your entire career. In many places this is not even accepted. We live in a globalised world and internationalisation is a must. Many successful transitions we have witnessed happen when people have been abroad. Internationalisation creates new networks and skills and can pave the way for huge career jumps. Not being mobile limits your possibilities considerably. We have heard many people complaining about this and that, but never heard regrets about going abroad.

Consider a deliberate or emergent strategy

Science is a moving frontier and technologies and strategies that were successful yesterday may not be today. Think about big global companies that were in the lead 10–15 years ago: Kodak, Nokia, Yahoo, Blockbuster – today all gone or a shadow of what they used to be. New companies such as Google, Apple and Samsung have taken over by being innovative, strategic and able to use and adapt to changes. Sustained academic success similarly calls for continuous adaptation to the highly dynamic changes in science, technology and diseases. Adaptive thinking and behaviour is a difficult

discipline to master. Plan ahead: Think about where you want to be and what you want to do in one, five and 10 years. Consider a personal strategy with specific goals regarding achievements, funding, building infrastructure, recruitment of people and private life. Or seek direction by considering what you don't want, what you want to avoid and not be like. But be ready to adapt your strategy to change, do not latch on to outdated ideas, and keep exploring new potential and opportunities.

Collaborate!

We believe the future belongs to collaborative people. The bar continues to rise with increased global competition, complexity and novel technology. You can't master it all – team up with people with complementary skills. Great things happen if you successfully combine unique and separate skills and competencies.

Become the best version of yourself

Everything comes at a price. Academics can be tough and competitive and achieving success is demanding. Not all thrive well in transitions and by becoming lead faculty. Overall, consider if it is worth it. Are you happy? Can you create a career that can help unleash your potential and combine it with a work-life balance you can accept? Recall your thoughts generated in the introductory section. Learn to enjoy the process; the joy should be in the process, not just in reaching a goal. Consider what fuels your initiative and drive and makes you happy in everyday life – this is your core – protect it!

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